

## Project: CAtArINa's Dictionary

### Narrative Proposal for Artistic research

My work focuses on researching the interplay between and translation of image, text, voice, sound and music. As a multimedia artist with a broad creative experience in drawing, video production, live video (VJ), set design, theatre, and dance my works are often intricate parts of large scale productions in a wide variety of settings.

'Catarina's Dictionary' is inspired by Catarina Gomez the main protagonist 'Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment' by anthropologist João Biehl. and what she called her *Dictionary* — all 19 parts are collected in the appendix of the book.

These texts address a universal spectrum of issues that include patriarchy, poverty, abuse and sexism, all presented from a highly personal perspective. It is my hope to bring these texts to the fore, explore and address these themes within the language of her poetry in a vocal and visual form.

In collaboration with the French actress Elsa Hourcade, I want to creatively work with these texts and the life of Catarina to establish an interactive space that engages the audience in Catarina's intense dialogue with herself, to give her words a voice by placing the viewer face-to-face with her spoken embodied words and images in an 'archive' of 'associative objects' that reflect the conception, discussion and developmental processes of this project, without overwhelming but rather serving the words.

Research began in 2014 during a Residency at Maisons Daura, Saint-Cirq-Lapopie. It became even clearer from the examples of Catarina's writing that the translation of language from thought to the written word was a battle for her.

The Dictionary was transcribed and structured by Biehl from her notebooks. Then translated from Portuguese into English. Elsa, fluent in English, decided to translate them into her native French in order to better penetrate the texts. Against this background, the question and process of translation intimately entwined with this current discourse in contemporary art, emerged for us as a central theme of the performance/staging as we envision it at this point.

Catarina's Dictionary is an investigation into how her dictionary reveals the way she writes herself back into existence against efforts to erase her from society.

The performance will be that of a woman trying to enter the poems of another. Exploring the texts, visualising them and giving them a body to inhabit. Opening these poems and sharing with the audience a journey of investigation across translation. And using the archive and installation in which to unravel the cryptic, poetic words in the dictionary. Juxtaposing them with complex network of family, medicine, state, and economy deliver that led to her pathology. and abandonment.

The residency is crucial to provide a space where we can experiment with the material, to try out different combinations of spoken word, video and create and staging storyboards in order to visualise the text. Furthermore, it will give us the chance to present and rehearse in different spaces and with residents, making it possible to design the piece in relation to specific surroundings – a core factor of the work imagined.

## Methodology, Planning and Forms of research

Theoretical; Creative / Performative and Discursive. These three forms cannot be seen as separate from each other, they will be conducted in constant mutual exchange and interaction, overlapping and interfering with one and other.

1. Theoretical research to investigate and understand Catarina's Dictionary through João Biehl's understanding that opens into an examination of Catarina language and translation.
  - Visit João Biehl 's archive in Princeton in which all of Catarina's surviving dictionaries are kept, to research, document (copy, photograph, video) her original dictionary.
  - Interview Biehl, record his voice and stories that may not have found their way into the book.
  - Questions about translation
  - To discuss his translations and interpretations of her dictionary. her physical process of writing - with both her (undiagnosed) debilitating disease and with the drugs she was given for the falsely diagnosed illnesses.
  - To understand her relationship to and use of language, of words, record interview with him talking about her and their relationship.
2. Discursive practices: aspects of the theoretical and practical research to investigate through the catalogue and archive the spatial and emotional realm which she occupied at Vita through with documentation of her Dictionary and the interviews with Biehl.
  - Catalogue/archive the digitised Catarina's Dictionary to offer audiences an opportunity to access her words, her hand-writing.
  - Repositioning Biehl's role as my interlocutor and source.
  - Analyse and critically investigate Biehl's translation of Catarina's Dictionary.
3. Create visual representations of Catarina's dictionary through sound, images, visuals and her words that encompass the social landscape of her medicated state and her journey through the lens of pharmaceuticalisation and her abandonment. A real and imagined journey.
  - To map her state of mind, her experiences, through her words which must be embodied in a voice and installation/archive/set (on paper, in performance, video, drawing, collage) that will open up new ways to represent them within the installation.
  - To develop and build an installation to present the dictionary, an interactive space that engages and welcomes the audience in Catarina's intense dialogue with herself.

4. Research through performing to give her words a voice, a body. A being to project Catarina's words into our world. A living voice to activate the archive.
- Focusing on the 19 Books of Catarina's Dictionary, to create a dynamic and multi-faceted performance that weaves together threads of speech, gesture, projections and sound.
  - Utilise montage to magnify the intense operations of perception and memory held within the dictionary.
  - Live performance exploring the texts, trying to get to grips with them, reading them, translating them, juxtaposing them, visualising them and giving them a body to inhabit. The performance would be that of a woman trying to enter the poems of another. Arising out of a sense of empathy and curiosity, she wants to open these poems and share with the audience a journey of investigation across translation.